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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2617  
INFO RUEHZN/ENVIRONMENT SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY COLLECTIVE  
RUEHME/AMEMBASSY MEXICO 0603  
RUEHUL/AMEMBASSY SEOUL 5054  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 9032  
RUEHFK/AMCONSUL FUKUOKA 3750  
RUEHNAG/AMCONSUL NAGOYA 1412  
RUEHNH/AMCONSUL NAHA 6088  
RUEHOK/AMCONSUL OSAKA KOBE 7552  
RUEHKS/AMCONSUL SAPPORO 4287  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 3508  
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DEPT FOR EAP/J  
USDA PASS TO APHIS, FAS FOR BURDETT  
HHS PASS TO CDC  
HHS FOR OGHA  
DEPT PASS TO AID/GH/HIDN

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SUBJECT: UPDATE ON JAPAN'S RESPONSE TO H1N1 OUTBREAK

REF: TOKYO 00965

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This Message is Sensitive but Unclassified. Please handle accordingly.

11. (SBU) Summary: No human cases of swine flu have been reported in Japan. The Health Ministry raised Japan's domestic pandemic alert April 28 to a level corresponding to an outbreak of pandemic influenza abroad. The GOJ authorized expanded border screening to include arrivals from the U.S. and Canada, as well as from Mexico, but staffing constraints may preclude boarding all those arriving flights. The GOJ is considering sending military doctors to Tokyo's Narita Airport to assist with quarantine. The MHLW has also begun contacting recent returnees from Mexico to assess their health. The GOJ is advising some 6,000 Japanese living in Mexico to take precautionary measures and to consider leaving Mexico if they anticipate restrictions on air travel or medical care. The Prime Minister's interagency working group decided to begin developing a vaccine against the H1N1 virus. The Agriculture Minister continues to emphasize to the public the safety of consuming pork and said the GOJ considers the H1N1 outbreak to be a human infection. End Summary.

12. (U) As of April 28, 2009 1600 local time, no human cases of Type A H1N1 influenza (Swine Flu) have been reported in Japan. Chief Cabinet Secretary Kawamura said no Japanese at home or abroad are suspected to have been infected with the virus, according to media reports.

13. (SBU) On April 28, the Ministry of Health Labor and Welfare (MHLW) raised Japan's domestic pandemic alert level from zero to Stage One. Stage One measures are implemented in response to an outbreak of pandemic influenza outside Japan, according to MHLW officials.

14. (SBU) The GOJ has expanded health screening measures at ports of entry in line with the higher pandemic alert stage. The MHLW has asked local health centers to contact passengers who have returned to Japan from Mexico in the past 10 days. As of April 28, MHLW has authorized quarantine officers to board flights arriving in Japan from the U.S., Canada, and Mexico before allowing passengers to deplane. However, MHLW officials noted staffing constraints may prevent quarantine officers from boarding all arriving flights. Medical personnel from Japan's Ground Self Defense Force (GSDF) may be dispatched to Narita Airport as early as April 29 to assist with possible quarantine, according to GSDF officials. Border officials are requesting passengers and crew arriving from the U.S., Canada, and Mexico to fill out a questionnaire providing their contact information in Japan and are continuing to use thermographic imaging to identify ill passengers. Japanese officials said no decision has been made on restricting flights arriving from the U.S., Canada, and Mexico to one of four international airports -- Narita, Kansai, Chubu, or Fukuoka. (Note: All scheduled outbound and inbound flights to and from the U.S. use one of Narita, Kansai, or Chubu International Airports. End Note)

15. (U) The MOFA's Consular Bureau is urging travelers to postpone travel to Mexico and in a MOFA statement is advising Japanese citizens in Mexico to remain indoors, stockpile food and water, and closely monitor their health. MOFA also suggests Japanese citizens in Mexico consider making arrangements to depart the country before the imposition of any restrictions on commercial travel or access to medical facilities. Media report there are approximately 6,000 Japanese residents in Mexico.

16. (SBU) The GOJ's interagency task force PM Aso set up to deal with the pandemic threat has, according to Health Ministry officials, charged MHLW with developing a vaccine for the current

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H1N1 virus.

17. (SBU) Minister for Consumer Affairs Noda commented on reports that a major restaurant chain stopped serving Mexican pork by telling the press "pork is completely safe, so such an action is regrettable." Agriculture Minister Ishiba said the GOJ will no longer use the term "Swine Influenza" and stressed that the GOJ considers the virus a human infection. Media here report Minister Ishiba also said "it is not a good thing" that some retailers are promoting the sale of non-Mexican pork. MHLW contacts confirmed there are no plans to restrict pork imports into Japan.

ZUMWALT